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This discussion outline develops the argument that there is significant dissonance between present efforts to promote the professionalization of teaching and the demands which societal expectations place on teacher education now and for the future. To develop this argument, an attempt is made to (1) identify some of the social conditions and trends which appear to be peculiarly relevant to teacher education and its institutional and organizational arrangements; (2) review briefly some of the efforts that have been made and are being made to professionalize teaching; (3) identify some of the points at which societal expectations, and the changes and actions they appear to demand, are in potential or actual conflict with actions designed to facilitate the professionalization of teaching; and (4) raise some questions regarding alternative possibilities for teacher education in the decade ahead. (Author/SG)

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TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE NATIONAL SCENE:

Societal Expectations and Professional Aspirations

Richard E. Lawrence

Presented at a Conference Honoring

Florence B. Stratemeyer

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TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE NATIONAL SCENE:

Societal Expectations and Professional Aspirations*

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1. Introduction

The purposes of this annotated outline are to stimulate and to provide a framework for a forthright discussion of selected features of the current national scene and their implications for the future of teacher education. In general the approach taken is based on the view that there is a significant dissonance between our present efforts to promote the professionalization of teaching and the demands which societal expectations place on teacher education now and for the future. In order to develop this argument an attempt will be made to:

1.1 Identify some of the social conditions and trends which appear to be peculiarly relevant to teacher education and its institutional and organizational arrangements.

1.2 Review briefly some of the efforts that have been and are being made to professionalize teaching.

1.3 Identify some of the points at which societal expectations, and the changes and actions they appear to demand, are in potential or actual conflict with actions designed to facilitate the professionalization of teaching.

1.4 Raise some questions regarding alternative possibilities for teacher education in the decade ahead.

It should be noted that the argument of this presentation assumes there is a close relationship between teacher education as it is presently organized and carried out (as well as the teacher educators involved) and organized efforts to develop a profession of teaching.

2. Some Social Changes Relevant to Teacher Education

Change is so much a part of modern life that to discuss it without being banal is difficult. No effort is made in the following to identify all, or even most, of the changing social conditions which are having, or might be expected to have, an impact on education or, more particularly, on teacher education. Based on my own personal, and undoubtedly biased, perspective, I have chosen to focus on a limited number of changing conditions which seem

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especially pertinent to developments in teacher education in the decade ahead. I trust they will suggest others which ought to be considered in our discussion.

2.1 Accelerated democratization of higher education: This condition is reflected in -

2.11 Rising demands for education beyond the high school at a time when enrollments in colleges and universities are exceeding their capacities.

2.12 Special efforts to identify and give special pre-college preparation to potentially successful "disadvantaged" youth.

2.13 Tendencies for educational programs to acquire a more vocational (and hence less scholarly) orientation.

2.14 The growth of most small institutions into relatively large ones and of large institutions into gigantic, multi-campused operations.

2.15 Special programs designed to provide much-needed help to predominantly Negro institutions.

2.2 Increased social awareness of and sensitivity to the special problems of the minority and disadvantaged sectors of our population.

This condition is exemplified in the wide variety of programs and activities which have had strong appeal to the more socially sensitive members of collegiate student bodies and faculties. For example,

2.21 The Peace Corps
2.22 The War on Poverty
2.23 The variety of efforts designed to end segregation and bring about equality of opportunity for minority and disadvantaged persons.

2.3 Dramatic initiation of massive Federal government programs with direct implications for education.
For example:

2.31 The Economic Opportunity Program
2.32 The Expanded NDEA Program
2.33 The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
2.34 The Higher Education Facilities Act

And such proposed legislation as:

2.35 The Higher Education Act of 1965
2.36 The Educational Assistance Act of 1965
2.37 The Nelson Amendment for a National Teacher Corps.

2.4 Development of new institutions and new institutional relationships in order to meet the social demands illustrated by 2.2 and 2.3 above. For example:

2.41 The Job Corps program with its heavy reliance on industry-run training centers.

2.42 Project Headstart with its tendency to avoid any real acceptance of professional advice and involvement.

2.43 Community action programs with educational goals which are being organized and operated outside of the regular school system.

2.44 Evidence that the leadership of the new socially oriented educational programs view "the establishment" as resistive to change and unable to respond quickly to the new requirements of the present situation.

3. Efforts to Professionalize Teaching

Through activities as members of a variety of organized groups at local, state and national levels school and college personnel have worked separately and in concert to encourage and facilitate the development and recognition of a profession of teaching. These efforts have focused on:

3.1 Defining the goals of a teaching profession;

3.2 Defining the characteristics of a member of a teaching profession;

3.3 Specifying standards of ethical and competent practice to be expected of individual members;

3.4 Applying individual standards through certification procedures -- membership requirements -- review and assessment of professional practices in service;

3.5 Specifying standards for institutions which prepare teachers;

3.6 Applying institutional standards through NCATE;

3.7 Identifying and fixing the responsibilities which a teaching profession must have and fulfill;

3.8 Defining the necessary conditions for professional self-determination and autonomy;

3.9 Developing and using effective sanctions through which standards can be enforced and the profession established and protected.

In summary, it may be noted that these efforts have been designed to upgrade the quality of the teaching corps, broadly defined, and to provide the foundations for a profession of teaching by controlli ng the points of entry into teaching, by defining the nature of the preparatory programs for teachers, and by applying standards of professional competence to teachers in service.

4. Societal Expectations vis a vis Professional Aspirations

For the past two decades we have lived in a period of increasing and, to a large extent, increasingly effective efforts to professionalize teaching, our chosen occupation. Most of us have known personally many of the leaders in this exciting, up-hill struggle. Because we have recognized them for the fine persons they are and because we have joined in their "crusade" out of aspirations which are fundamentally and, I believe, sincerely altruistic, we have never doubted the sincerity of their motivations nor the value of the goals which they, and we, have sought to attain.

But others have, as we are all well aware. To them our organized efforts to achieve the goals implied in professionalization have become rigidified in an "establishment," sometimes referred to as the establishment. Our struggles to attain the kinds of power which is realistically needed to influence broad institutional and bureaucratic relationships are viewed by "outsiders" as self-seeking and unresponsive to the demands of the times.

Our response to such questioning of the activities we undertake on behalf of our worthy objectives is a normal one. We seek to justify our defensible motivations and goals by explaining the importance and the reasonableness of the not-so-defensible means we are employing. Without professional status and responsibility (means, not ends) we argue, we are unable to make the contributions which are demanded of us.

First, we plead for higher standards of admission and retention in the profession. This in the face of:

4.11 a continued high demand for and limited supply of teachers to man our burgeoning schools;

4.12 a rapidly increasing number of "sub-professional" and "extra-professional" positions in a wide range of educational enterprises outside of the regular school system which urgently require well-prepared persons to fill them;

4.13 a wide range of opinions regarding what it is that really makes a good "teacher" anyway.

Second, we strive for a system of national accreditation which will eliminate "unfit" programs and institutions. This in the face of:

4.21 the rapidly increasing demand for more opportunities in higher education -- a demand which is becoming so great that it is literally inconceivable that any institutions other than real "diploma mills" can be allowed to go out of business.

4.22 a rather thorough disagreement about what it is that makes a college good, or even acceptable, as a place to prepare teachers.

4.23 the existence of a sizeable number of predominantly Negro institutions which for one reason or another are unaccreditable under almost any conceivable standards but which are needed today more than ever before.

4.24 the acceleration of changes in curriculum and instructional techniques which do not lend themselves as yet to standardization.

4.25 the inevitable development of serious shortages of personnel qualified to staff "accreditable" institutions.

Third, we strive to formalize and institutionalize our relationships and responsibilities in complex arrangements which protect the autonomy of the "profession." In so doing we leave out, even though unintentionally, many of the persons who have a vital concern for teacher education. This in the face of:

4.31 our growing recognition of the need to make teacher education a concern and responsibility of the total collegiate institution.

4.32 the clearly evident requirement that our structures for relationships be kept as flexible and as receptive to change as possible.

5. Some Questions Regarding Alternatives for the Future

If our ultimate goal is "to provide the best possible education for the citizens of this nation," (New Horizons, p. 6), it seems to me that we should reconsider the effects of our current efforts to use teacher education as one of the important means for professionalizing teaching on our ability to meet the demands of the times.

5.1 Can we broaden our conception of our responsibility as teacher educators so that it includes the needs of the "sub-professionals" who are so essential to the programs designed to provide educational opportunities for the neglected and the disadvantaged?

5.2 Can we more effectively combat the tendency to identify "the profession" with a single organization, the NEA?

5.3 Can we devise more effective means for keeping our educational system flexible, for encouraging and facilitating change, and for preventing the further intrenchment of conditions which stifle education -- especially teacher education?

5.4 Can we free ourselves for undertaking the fundamental task of defining what it is we are trying to do in teacher education by setting aside, at least temporarily, our efforts to develop the standards and the controls which a "profession" requires?

5.5 Can we find expansive rather than restrictive ways to upgrade the quality of the persons entering teaching and of the programs which are offered for their preparation?

As Anderson[1] has suggested, "Perhaps those in the field of teacher education have to achieve and sustain a 'calmly judicial outlook,' a mood which can enable those at work in this field to accept the current slowness of progress without abandoning hope for a 'rapid forward movement' to come. It is a mood which applies to teacher education the same outlook which Crane Brinton has expressed with respect to the future of democratic society itself. Brinton says that considerable 'multanimity' (as he calls it) about very fundamental matters can persist if the existence of such disagreement is taken, not as a lofty ideal of toleration, of progress through variation (though for many intellectuals it is just that) but as something given, something normal for human beings. Complete intellectual agreement is 'unnatural' in a democracy and 'the whole course of our intellectual history would indicate that in some perverse, obstinate way Western intellectuals have always thrived on their differences.'[2] It is to be hoped that Brinton's faith in the beneficial effects of disagreement in society at large, will be as valid with respect to the problems of teacher education."

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1 Archibald W. Anderson. "The Teaching Profession: An Example of Diversity in Training and Function." In Education for the Professions, Sixty-first Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, pp. 140-167.

2 Crane Brinton. The Shaping of the Modern Mind, p. 258. New York. New American Library, 1953.